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Sir,

In 'The Logic of Banning Nuclear Weapons' (*Survival*, vol. 59, no. 1, December 2016-January 2017, pp. 43-51), Beatrice Fihn provides an insightful explanation for the motivations underpinning recent negotiations for a nuclear weapons ban treaty. Her argument, however, suggests these motivations are uniform across civil society groups and states participating in negotiations, which is not the case. Indeed, many state participants are motivated by political frustrations and security concerns, along with humanitarian ones. This is an important point for going forward in the next round of negotiations in the United Nations General Assembly, 15 June- 7 July.

In her argument, Fihn acknowledges the underlying frustration among many states with lack of progress towards disarmament in existing forums. Yet one of the more surprising points in her arguments is that, 'this frustration has helped the ban treaty's cause- but this is not why nuclear weapons are being banned.' While civil society groups may claim to be motivated purely on humanitarian grounds, the same cannot be said for the majority of states participating in negotiations. To be sure, civil society groups have been an integral part of the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons initiative and built significant momentum for exploring new approaches to disarmament. But it is states that are ultimately negotiating and potentially signing onto a ban treaty, and their motivations are more complicated.

Disarmament has been a political issue even since the inception of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968, as argued elsewhere by Matthew Harries.ⁱ The politics of disarmament and frustration with the NPT remain the root cause for these recent efforts to ban nuclear weapons, albeit with an increased awareness of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use, which is indeed an important and timely contribution. Contrary to Fihn's point, frustration with current disarmament mechanisms was evidenced throughout the humanitarian impacts initiative and even in the first round of negotiations for a ban treaty in March. For example, Austria's opening statement repeatedly mentioned the lack of progress in existing forums and cited the 'humiliating failure' of the NPT 2015 Review Conference.ⁱⁱ

Another example of differences in perspective is that Fihn dismisses the security motivations for nuclear possession and argues that the true barrier to disarmament is states' 'perception' that nuclear weapons are central to their security. Again, this may be the opinion of civil society but does not reflect the perspective of many states, which must balance security, economic, diplomatic, and moral concerns. Neither security nor ethics should be treated in a vacuum or as mutually exclusive.ⁱⁱⁱ In its statement at the 2014 conference on the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons, for example, Canada insightfully captured this balance in its statement: 'Canada is concerned that simply banning nuclear weapons, without recognition of both their security and humanitarian dimensions, will not bring us any closer to a world free of nuclear weapons.'^{iv} Serious efforts at disarmament will have to acknowledge and address these underlying security concerns rather than dismiss them as inconsequential.

A final point from Fihn's argument demonstrating difference of opinion between civil society and states is the perceived value of the NPT. Fihn suggests that a nuclear weapons ban treaty is an opportunity to move away from the Treaty's 'bargain',

whereby state participants committed not to pursue nuclear weapons in exchange for the five acknowledged possessor states' commitment to pursue 'general and complete disarmament'. Many statements by civil society groups fail to acknowledge the major contributions of the NPT in preventing the further spread of nuclear weapons, allowing for peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and building an international norm against proliferation.^v The Treaty should not be taken for granted, which states seem to acknowledge more readily than does civil society.^{vi}

What is needed most is outreach and bridge-building between supporters of the ban treaty and leaders within the NPT so as to merge security and ethics, and to ensure the Treaty is not undermined. Adam Mount and Richard Nephew offered one such suggestion, whereby a ban treaty would strive to 'do no harm to the NPT' by 'reaffirming all participants' obligations to the NPT' and rescinding membership to the ban treaty if states are found to be noncompliant with the NPT. Such overtures have been largely ignored by supporters of the ban treaty.

The debate over a nuclear weapons ban is likely to continue regardless of the outcome of negotiations this summer, and may potentially pivot to revisiting the controversial 1996 International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on Nuclear Weapons. At some point nuclear possessor states such as the United Kingdom will have to engage with the frustrations that underlie the ban treaty movement and better engage in debates about deterrence and nuclear possession. Fihn has offered a truly helpful explanation for how civil society approaches disarmament issues and will continue to pursue a ban treaty, which, perhaps unintentionally, highlights the difference in perspective between civil society groups and states. The former should not be mistaken for the latter.

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ⁱ Matthew Harries, 'Disarmament as Politics: Lessons From the Negotiation of NPT Article VI', Chatham House Research Paper, May 13, 2015, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/disarmament-politics-lessons-negotiation-npt-article-vi>

ⁱⁱ Statement by Ambassador Alexander Marschik, United Nations Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, leading towards their total Elimination, New York, March 27, 2017, http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/nuclear-weapon-ban/statements/27March_Austria.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Heather Williams, 'Why a Nuclear Weapons Ban is Unethical (For Now)', *RUSI Journal*, vol. 161, no. 2 (April 2016).

^{iv} Canadian Statement, Third Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, Vienna, December 8-9, 2014,
https://www.bmeia.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Zentrale/Aussenpolitik/Abruestung/HINW14/Statements/HINW14_Statement_Canada.pdf

^v Matthew Fuhrmann and Yonatan Lupu, 'Do Arms Control Treaties Work? Assessing the Effectiveness of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty', *International Studies Quarterly*, 60 (2016), pp. 530-539.

^{vi} See, for example, Austria statement above in full.